

**Smoke Managers Subcommittee  
Conference call  
04.09.2013**

**Roll Call:**

**Mike Broughton, Colorado/USFWS**  
**Claudia Standish, New Mexico/BLM State Office**  
**Leif Paulson, Wyoming/Air Quality Division**  
**Ursula Parker, California/Butte County AQMD**  
**Karen Brooks, California/San Luis Obispo APCD**  
**Rick Gillam, U.S. EPA, Southeast Region, Atlanta, Georgia**  
**Ann Hobbs, California/Placer County APCD**  
**Gary Curcio, IPA FES-FE Forester, Retired NC Forester**  
**Julie Simpson, Nez Perce Tribe**  
**Andrea Boyer, Nez Perce Tribe**  
**Todd Richardson, Colorado/ BLM**  
**Carol Blocksome, Kansas/Kansas State University**  
**Mike McGown, US EPA, Region X**  
**Jennifer Malinski, Red Lake Nation, Minnesota**  
**Lawra Boyce, South Carolina/South Carolina DHEC**  
**Rick Boddicker, South Dakota/Department of Environment and Natural Resources**  
**Dar Mims, California/ARB**  
**Dan Washington, Utah/ Eastern Great Basin Coordination Center**  
**Jim Roehl, Tuolumne County APCD**  
**Gary Arcemont, California//San Luis Obispo APCD**  
**Heidi Hill, Vermont/Air Pollution Control**  
**Erin Law, Idaho/Idaho-Montana Air Shed Group**

*The purpose of the Smoke Manager's Sub-Committee is to increase communications amongst the community of air quality professionals, other state and federal governmental agencies, land managers, and other persons conducting burning activities.*

**Annual Summary: Who We Are, Where We've Been and Where We're Going: Mike Broughton**

- **Who We Are:** We are a subcommittee of the National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG) and are a collection of burners and regulators across the country practicing the art of balancing burning needs with needs for clean air. This group offers a network in which to share information across different groups.
  - We have been having regular quarterly meetings since early 2011.
  - We have covered regular updates to smoke air quality, wildfire smoke planning, regulations, air resource advisors, smoke manager contact list (useful for info sharing in or near your area), air quality smoke communication/coordination plans, case study reviews – challenges, what went wrong, etc., and individuals have presented information of interest to them. For example, **Gary Curcio** has presented info on SuperFog and the use of prediction models.
- **Where we are headed:** Including the whole group dynamic, we would like to include regional and national issues. Anytime something comes up, please pass it along to **Mike**

**Broughton, Claudia Standish** and/or **Ursula Parker** and we can get answers, whether it is a communication protocol or smoke management plan or another issue.

### **EPA Regulatory Update - Rick Gillam**

- The AQ Policy on Wildland and Rx Fires that was originally issued in 1998 has been in the process of being updated. The plan has been to go to different areas of country to get input from different stakeholders and burners. The budget crunch has hindered progress and they are considering webinars, phone calls, etc. to get input prior to EPA putting something out in draft form, a detailed outline of what the policy would address. Bill Harnett at EPA headquarters isn't sure what the timing for it will be.
- **Mike Broughton** stated that he heard that while states haven't seen much, federal partners haven't seen anything since July 2010. Rick replied that no one is being excluded while Feds work together with EPA, it's just that this phase is all with EPA. The next stage is with the state stakeholders. Rick reiterated that the plan is to try to address some of the concerns with input from outside parties.
- Last summer, EPA put out draft guidance to improve the process for implementing EPA's Exceptional Events Rule (EER) and was looking for public input. The draft included a definition of prescribed fire and other fire-related guidance as well as minor related points on ozone related to fire. It is scheduled to be released as final very soon (within the next week or two). Rick will send an email with the link to final guidance once it is released.
- There is going to be a webinar on April 30<sup>th</sup> from 3-4 Eastern Time. Webinar is about a new EPA tool, Exceptional Events Decision Support System Tool. The tools are useful for fire-related exceptional event evaluations. It uses satellite info and modeling info that is avail through system. Up to 200 people can participate in the webinar. Registration form at:  
<https://esipfed.webex.com/esipfed/k2/j.php?ED=222698102&UID=1560585307&HMAC=6a9d5b20eee6a53faab07902334301cbbdf01cc1&RT=MiMxMQ%3D%3D&FM=1>
- **Mike McGowan** addressed the group to report that EPA Region 10 also wants to go out to work with the tribes to address their concerns.
- **Gary Curcio** commented that with EER, will there be more consistency? Rick said that it addresses a lot of more general issues when dealing w/exceptional events and hopefully it will make things more uniform and reduce resource burden. EPA will not require the use of this tool, it's just available for use if it is helpful. Gary said that usually a Blue Sky model is required but recently they had an exceptional event and EPA didn't require it; they appreciated that flexibility.
- There are no regulatory updates on standards at this time (PM standards were recently updated, see previous meeting minutes for info).

### **Wildfire Smoke Planning (Follow-up): Mike Broughton**

- We have already had a couple of wildfire starts this year although no smoke issues yet.
- Sadly, during a Rx burn in New Jersey, a driver drove through smoke without slowing down and hit and killed a fire fighter. They didn't have enough people on the ground to slow down traffic. This happened a couple of weeks ago.

- The Resource Advisor Training was held two weeks ago in Seattle. From our group, **Gary Cucio, Mike Broughton, and Erin Law** attended and **Claudia Standish** attended virtually. Bob Houseman, a NIMO Incident Commander (IC) presented a couple sessions virtually. Bob recognizes that for some incidents, an air quality specialist as part of the Incident Management Team can be a very useful tool, although not all ICs share this viewpoint. Many IC's see air quality specialists as impeding their progress rather than assisting, typically due to historic interactions with AQ regulators. There was a good session on communication, a couple of good presentations on how to use smoke models, information on monitoring, and a discussion about the different aspects of working on location with a fire as opposed to working remotely from a command station or remotely on a number of fires. The training effectively expanded the number of people who can come out to work on fires in future and the number of people who can be trained.
- **Claudia Standish** commented that Mike captured something really important: when we go out, the perception that we are valuable is growing. **Mike Broughton** added that ICs will say, "Why are you here?" It's better to bring examples of accomplishments from the past, say how we can help, tie into CIO, mention what has been done on other fires. Claudia adds that having an orientation packet for them would be a good idea. During the time before you get to the project you can put something together.
- **Gary Curcio** commented that in North Carolina, Type 2 ICs carry on message from national resource review and keep it on their radar screens. They are trying to lobby for time with Type 1 ICs (there are only a few across the country). In southern states in June, there is the southern Fire Chiefs' meeting and Gary wants to get on their agenda to help tell them what an air resource advisor can bring to event. An advisory can trigger a number of other advisories (special weather statement). Working with national weather service can have many advantages. If conditions warrant it, try to get a special weather statement issued. Mike agreed and added that if the national weather service issues a statement, the media picks up on that rather quickly. The local health agency, air quality agency, and others should be in on that so that they are ready before the media gets info out (they need to be prepared).
- **Gary Arcemont** added that the San Luis Obispo APCD is working on improving their relationship with the weather service and they see social media (Facebook and Twitter) as a useful tool. Not every person (weather service officer) is willing to work with you. Mike agreed and added that when an air resource advisor arrives on scene, they work right away on coordinating info (to help bridge that gap).
- **Todd Richardson** stated that he is a Type 2 IC for Rocky Mountains. Some backgrounds are different. He comes from fire use world and will need to move in baby steps. Our counterparts work under a different discretion. Just so you don't feel slighted, the home unit tells who the roster will be; they have to go with what is ordered. Negotiations are driven over money even more so now than in the past. He advised, "Just don't get frustrated."
- **Erin Law** wanted to remind the group of the value that the resource advisor brings to the whole team. The IC commander gets the bill for the resource advisor, but perhaps the costs should be shared by the different agencies that find value in the resource advisor. Mike added that most incidents don't need an air resource advisor; it's only the long term incidents that affect a major populated area that need that kind of help.
- **Claudia Standish** reported that they (BLM) recently presented on smoke at a WUI summit. This year they had a more profound effect on the audience than in the past.

Entering smoke into consciousness of the audience is important. When houses are burning, smoke is not the concern. Don't wait to be asked; move forward and ask to be included on agendas. Spread the word!

### **Smoke and Transportation Hazards: Mike Broughton**

- This item was added to agenda based on the NJ incident where firefighter was killed.
- Seems like the simplest solution: don't drive into it when you see it, but it's not always easy to avoid it.
- **Mike McGown** stated that they have had smoke impacts that have caused fatal accidents.
- Texas has signs about presence of smoke, saying don't drive into it.
- Consider the proximity of airports to smoke – smoke is often a factor in back country air strips. It would be good for an air resource advisor to be able to help forecast for conditions that would be helpful for backcountry aircraft.
- **Gary Curcio** added that the National Weather Service – as of a week ago, NWS to move fire weather point matrix and other related tools to be avail across country so that air resource advisors would have tool to look at smoke dispersion.

### **Night Time Rx Burning: Mike Broughton**

- This issue was brought up by **Ursula Parker**. There were Rx burners in Butte County (Northern California) whose burn continued into the night, prompting concerns from the public about allowing ignition at night. Ursula wanted to know if any agencies allowed night time Rx burning and if so, if there was any advantage or concerns about the practice.
- **Carol Blocksom** stated that in Kansas, it is against the law to start fire after dark but the fires are allowed to burn if already ignited.
- **Ann Hobbs** stated that in California, state law does not provide time restriction on Rx burning, but agricultural burning has a definite time frame. She stated that there was a recent incident in Truckee, where overnight smoke created impacts to the town from a 15 acre grass fire. She wanted the group to be aware that cold temperatures can really affect smoke behavior and to be careful.
- **Gary Curcio** said in North Carolina, the Smoke Management program says you can burn into and through the night provided you have good/fair dispersion/air quality. He personally has burned through the night, but it is more of a rarity. You have to evaluate the smoke conditions at night. Their landscape is a coastal plain with rolling flatlands. Mountain burning would be different because mountains are subject to diurnal flows into the valley unless you are burning on ridgetops where it will disperse better. **Mike Broughton** asked what type of acreage was burned. Gary said you can't use aircraft after sunset, so it has to be hand-lit. You are restricted by plan on the tonnage per 25 square mile area, so you have to calculate how much tonnage you are going to be releasing. Most programs shut down burning at sunset because you lose dispersion conditions as soon as sun goes down. But in North Carolina, if you have good surface winds to disperse smoke, it's generally okay. They use Observational Research Evaluation Burns (ORBS) to see how program might be expanded so that they can try new things. They run models based on no burn days using HYSPLIT and if the tools supported a go

decision, and dispersion/concentration looked okay, they would give a go decision; it has worked out well. They burned under poor/low mixing heights (1640 above ground level (AGL) is limit), they were burning at 1000 AGL successfully and they burned precisely within the burn window.

- **Ann Hobbs** added that Placer County is working with NWS out of Reno to give Spot Weather forecasts to look at nighttime conditions to find out what happens after the burn.

### **2013 International Smoke Symposium: Mike Broughton**

- The Symposium will be held the week of October 21<sup>st</sup> at the University of Maryland. More information to come in the next couple of months.

### **Round Robin: All**

**Claudia Standish:** Are we tackling issues that are near and dear to your heart? If someone has a “burning” issue, please bring it forward. (no comments)

**Lawra Boyce, SC:** Lawra is having a meeting (the third so far) tomorrow with a work group to bridge the gap between burners and air quality folks. The makeup of group: Bureau Chief of Air Quality and Forestry Commission and participants include foresters, including private, military, and public health representatives (Rick Gillam from EPA has been there). Tomorrow some private citizens may participate to share their concerns about smoke impacts. They will be working on communication and understanding perceptions that may be obstacles. Lawra will report how things go at next meeting. She’s been looking at Idaho and California communications plans and asked if any other states have info; they would love to see it.

**Mike Broughton:** Our Next meeting we may be hit or miss due to summer months. Mike is thinking the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of July? **Claudia Standish** asked if maybe we could have a shorter call the week of 5/14 – 5/21 and added that it seemed like frequency helps to bring more people together. **Ann Hobbs** suggested a query after each quarterly meeting to see what interest might be.